

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December XX, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

With the passage of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Congress has provided significant funding to update our aging infrastructure and protect us from the growing impacts of climate change. The Everglades provides a unique opportunity to accomplish both goals simultaneously. We request that your administration allocate at least \$1.5 billion to South Florida Ecosystem Restoration from the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration construction funding made available to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) through this legislation. This infusion of money is critically needed to build on the restoration program's recent advances and keep pace with the State of Florida's investments.

Further, we make this request with the understanding that this funding would be supplemental to the federal obligations reflected in the Integrated Delivery Schedule, which must be fulfilled solely by the administration's budget requests to Congress and regular appropriations for the upcoming fiscal years. We continue to ask that the USACE budget request appropriately fund Everglades restoration at \$725 million to achieve the goal of completing restoration efforts this decade.

Your American Jobs Plan framework specifically recognized the restoration of America's Everglades as an opportunity to combat climate change and build resilience through federal investment. That is because restoring the Everglades supports a myriad of benefits, including inland and coastal flood protection; recreation, habitat and ecosystem protection; human and ecological resilience; drinking water security for 9 million people; and a boon for local, state, and national economies.

A restored Everglades will enhance the carbon sequestration capacity of an ecosystem that spans 3 million acres of freshwater and estuarine wetlands, North America's largest contiguous mangrove forest, and expansive sea-grass beds. These areas are home to 78 threatened or endangered species, encompasses the tribal lands of two Native American tribes, includes 14 national wildlife refuges, four national parks, a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Importance.

USACE has confirmed to Congress publicly, that it has the ability to execute \$5 billion over the next five years on Everglades restoration. An infusion of \$1.5 billion in supplemental funding across FY22, FY23, and FY24 is needed to keep the long-term goal of completing Everglades restoration on schedule. Moreover, this funding would jumpstart the construction of the

Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir, a key project that will send clean water south while reducing damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the east and west coasts.

Additionally, completing Everglades restoration by 2030, as originally planned, would realize an estimated \$2 billion in savings. When authorized in 2000, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) was supposed be completed over 30 years. Prolonging CERP because of inadequate federal investment will only cause expenditures to increase in the long run and delay critical benefits that should be realized sooner.

Previous administrations have utilized supplemental funding to allow the Army Corps to initiate construction on CERP projects. Your administration now has a similar opportunity. We would therefore urge you to take advantage of this unique and timely chance to expedite progress on Everglades restoration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,